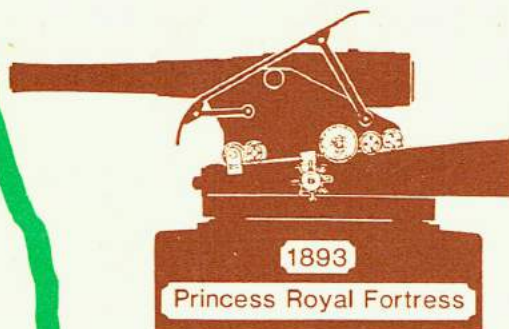


Plan

# A SOUND DEFENCE



Albany

KING GEORGE III SOUND



# **A** **Sound Defence**

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The Story of  
Princess Royal Fortress  
King George III Sound  
Western Australia

**Roger Martin**  
Special Projects Officer  
**Town of Albany**



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Western Australia

This booklet is dedicated to  
all servicemen and women  
who served at 'The Forts'.



#### GLOSSARY

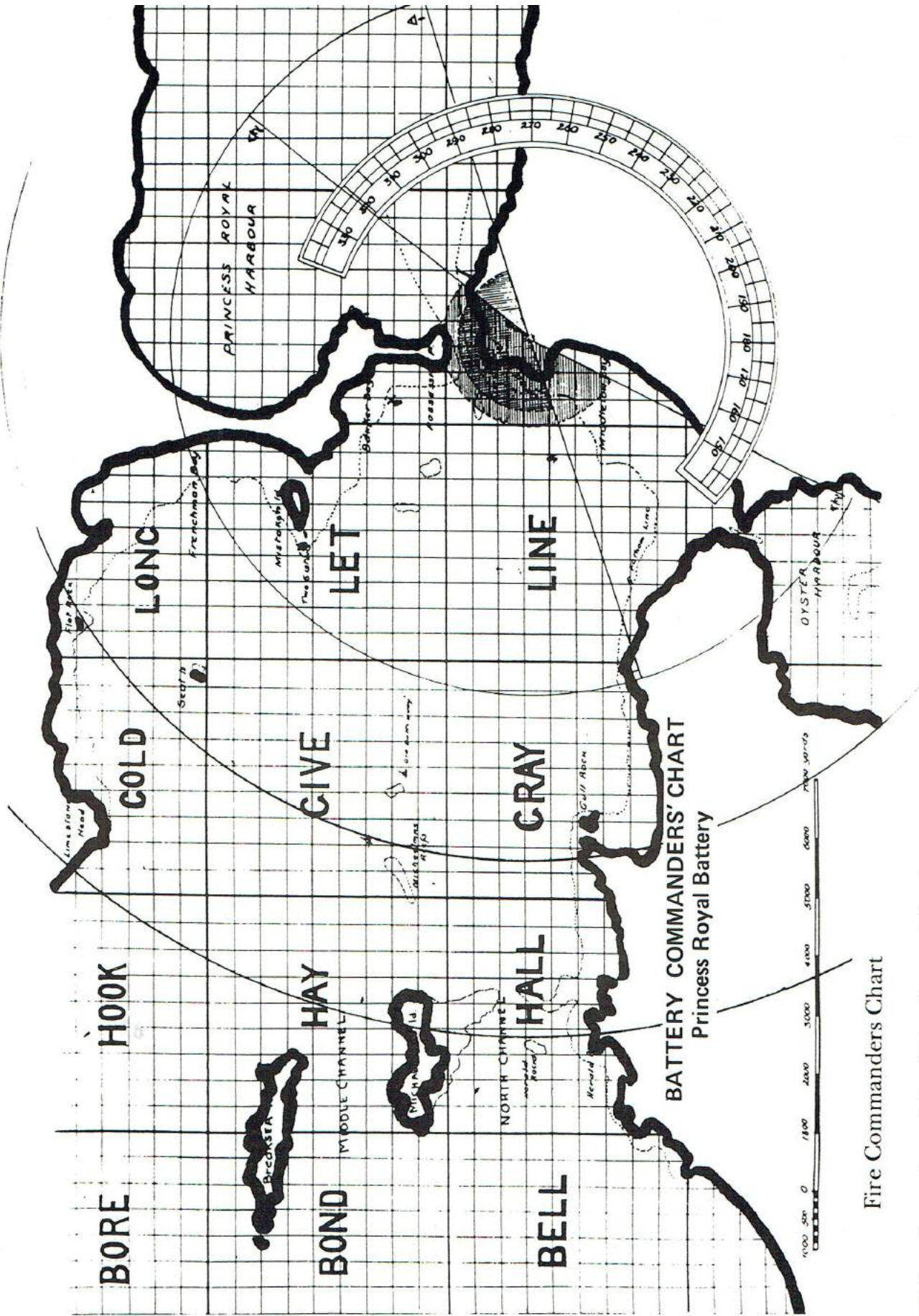
A.W.A.S.	Australian Womens Army Service
A.G.A.	Australian Garrison Artillery
E.O.C.	Elswick Ordnance Company
M	Militia
R.G.A.	Royal Garrison Artillery
R.A.G.A.	Royal Australian Garrison Artillery
V.D.C.	Volunteer Defence Corps
B.L.	Bench Loading
Bty	Battery
Q.F.	Quick Firing



## HISTORY IN BRIEF

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1826-7    | Settlement of King George Sound.<br>Birth of Western Australia.                               |
| 1881      | Defence report proposed Fort for King George Sound.   |
| 1887      | The Australian colonies agreed to jointly fund the construction of the Forts.                 |
| 1891      | Construction and Development Works commenced.   |
| 1893      | Construction of the Forts completed.  |
| 1901      | Federation  |
| 1908      | World Tour visit of the American "Great White Fleet".   |
| 1910      | The Forts visited and inspected by Lord Kitchener,<br>C in C Of British Army.                 |
| 1914-18   | Great War   |
| 1939      | The Princess Royal Battery was modernised and the original guns replaced.                     |
| 1939-1945 | Second World War  |
| 1956      | Coastal Defences closed down.<br>Area became surplus to Defence requirements.                 |
| 1950's    | Buildings used for a temporary school and later holiday accommodation until the early 1970's. |
| 1977      | Area resumed by Public Works Department for State Government.                                 |
| 1983      | Vested in the Town of Albany for recreation and heritage value.                               |
| 1987      | Conservation, Renovation and Development Programme commenced by Town of Albany.               |





Fire Commanders Chart

Taken from the original Fort Record Book.  
(A.B. 360)



## INTRODUCTION

'The Forts' is the affectionate name for the 'Princess Royal Fortress' which was originally called the 'Federal Fortress - King George III Sound' at Albany, Western Australia.

In 1627, 143 years before Captain James Cook entered Botany Bay, a Dutch merchant - Pieter Nuyts - explored the southern coast of Australia. He probably called in to a magnificent all-weather harbour some two hundred miles east of Cape Leeuwin. The visit of Captain George Vancouver in 1791 saw the coastline claimed for the Crown and the harbour named - King George III Sound.

The Sound became the site of the first settlement on the west side of Australia in 1827 when a penal outpost was constructed. The land was called New Holland but in 1831 became Western Australia and the outpost at the Sound grew into the town of Albany; first port in Australia for early steamships from Europe, the Cape, Suez and India.

In 1892, against a background of growing imperialism and naval expansion, a Federal fortress was built to defend the strategic coaling station and Port of Albany. The independent Australian States, realising that occupation by a hostile naval squadron would be a threat to their own security, agreed to jointly finance the fortress. The British Government provided the armaments.

In 1893 a permanent garrison was installed. The guns were mounted and the first Federal fortress was operational. Except for a short period during the 1920's, it remained in commission until 1956.

## **FORTRESS EXPLAINED**

In all the thousands of kilometres of Australian coastline between Shark Bay, in the north-west, and Port Phillip Bay (Melbourne) in the south-east, there is only one natural harbour. This is the Princess Royal Harbour - King George III Sound.

From early days the importance of this harbour was recognised. In a dispatch of 1827, addressed to the Colonial Secretary in Sydney, the founding commandant of this, the first settlement in New Holland (Western Australia), Major Edmund Lockyer, wrote that *"The importance of King George III Sound as a place necessary to occupy must strike every person acquainted with the country. An enemy holding it would with its 'cruizers' completely cut off the trade, except by convoys, from Europe, the Cape, Isle de France (Mauritius) and India .... to Van Diemens Land (Tasmania) and Port Jackson (Sydney)."*

Commanding panoramic views of Princess Royal Harbour, King George III Sound and Oyster Harbour, the Fortress site on Mount Adelaide consisted of two forts or batteries to defend the Sound and Harbour.

There were two forts at Albany - "PRINCESS ROYAL" on the Mt Adelaide summit, and "PLANTAGENET" near the shore at Point King - the entrance to the passage into the harbour. The use of the name "THE FORTS" to describe these two Forts is almost as old as the Fortress itself. The Forts were armed with 6" guns, modern guns of the era, which could fire 100 lb shells over 5 miles and were adequate to deal with warships of the day.

In today's age of high technology it is easy to forget the effectiveness of coast fortress defence. The Defence Advisor to the eastern Australian states, Colonel Peter Scratchley RE (later Major General Sir), was sent to King George III Sound in 1881 to prepare a plan of defence. Scratchley showed his appreciation of the effect that the fortress could have, *"No warship would take on or try to run past a well secured coastal defence fortress unless under dire circumstances or extreme foolhardiness."* A single shot could severely damage a warship which when far from facilities and a home port would put it at great risk.

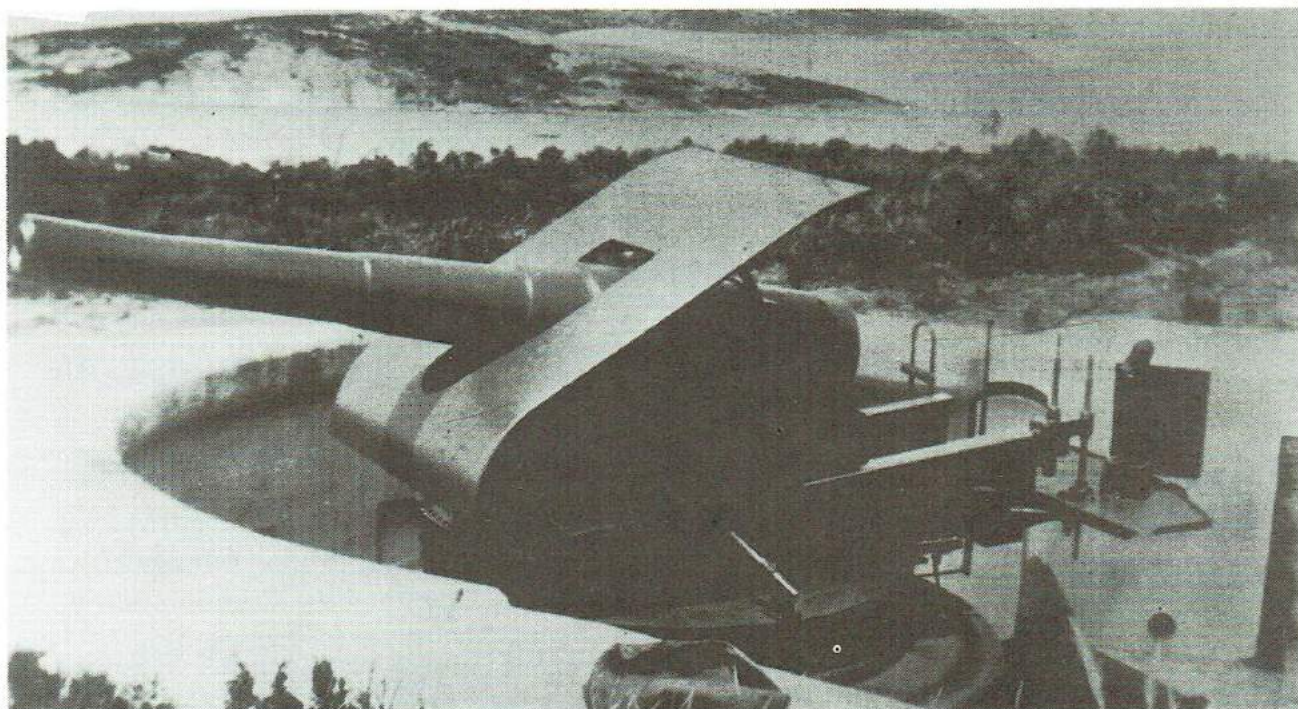
Therefore, the fortress acted as a deterrent and thus safeguarded Albany, an expanding port and a developing Australia.

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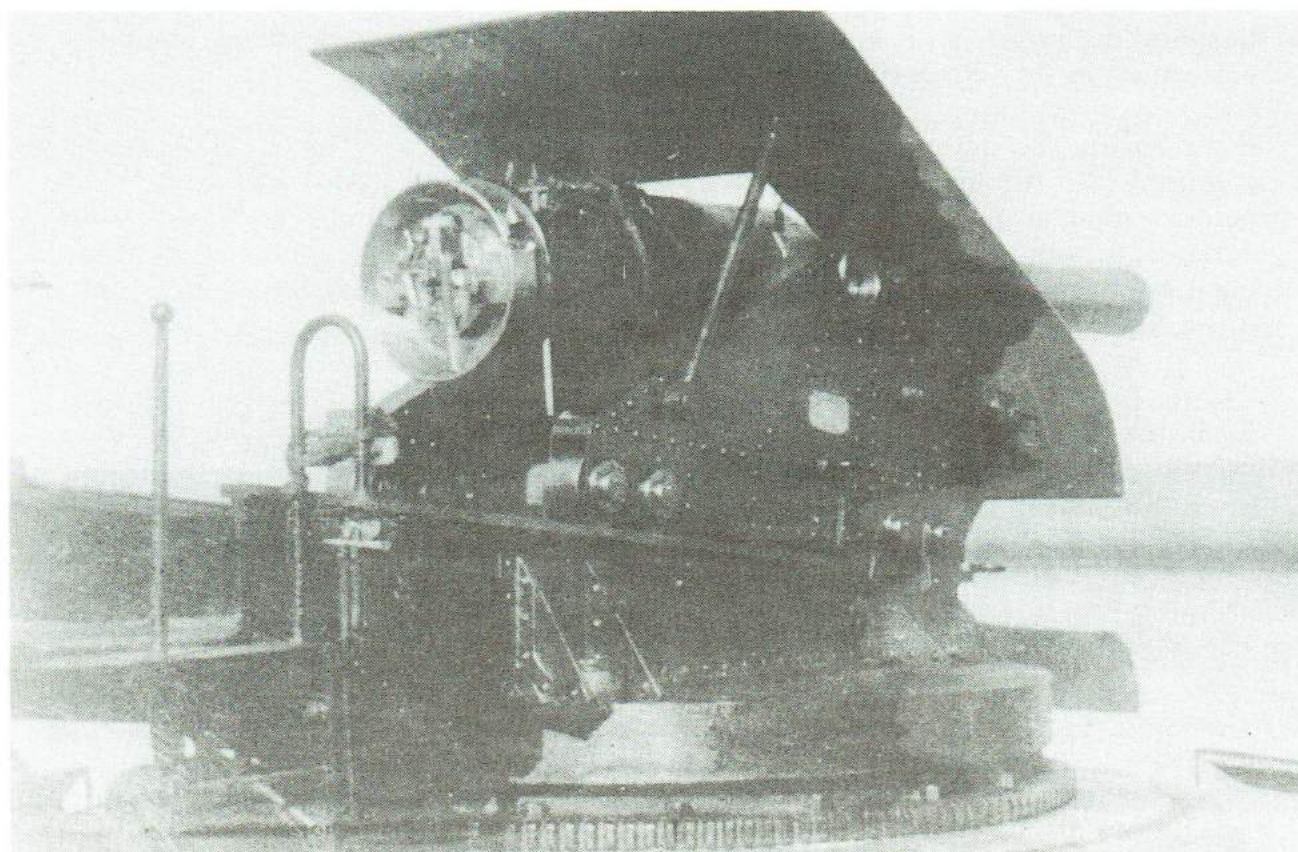
**"FORTS"** - An enclosed portion of the defences containing guns and the buildings appertaining thereto - sometimes this enclosed portion of the defences is styled a "Battery".

**"FORTRESS"** - In regard to coast fortress defence, this term is applied to every defended port at home or abroad. (War Office - London)





Original 6" Gun  
Overlooking the harbour entrance.



Original 6" Gun



## ALARM BELLS RING

The changing requirements of sailing ships, the change to coal powered steamships and the expansion of European powers provided the impetus for the establishment of "The Forts". The navy needed secure supply ports for its coal.

Fear and greed have always played a dominant role in history and the mid to late 19th century in Albany was no exception.

Australia was made up of independent colonial states and all but Western Australia, had responsible, or self-controlled, governments. Travel within Australia was very limited. Most communication and travel was by ship through coastal trade connecting with European mail liners.

In the second half of the 19th century, coal was the fuel for the steam ships which were rapidly supplanting the traditional sailing ships. The early steam ships were not very efficient and many bound for Australia, limped into Albany - desperately short of fuel.

Albany was the first port of call for steam ships coming from Europe, the Cape and India and for that reason alone, earned the title 'Key to Australia'. Lockyer's warning became ominously real as trade increased and an unprotected Albany made the eastern states very concerned for their own future and security.

For securing the defence of Albany the colonies turned to Britain. The British accepted that Albany should be defended but considered that it had covered its defence obligations by the raising of the 'Australia Squadron of Warships'. Land defence, Britain considered, was the responsibility of the colonial states - an interesting thought given that Britain was responsible at that time for the defence of Western Australia.

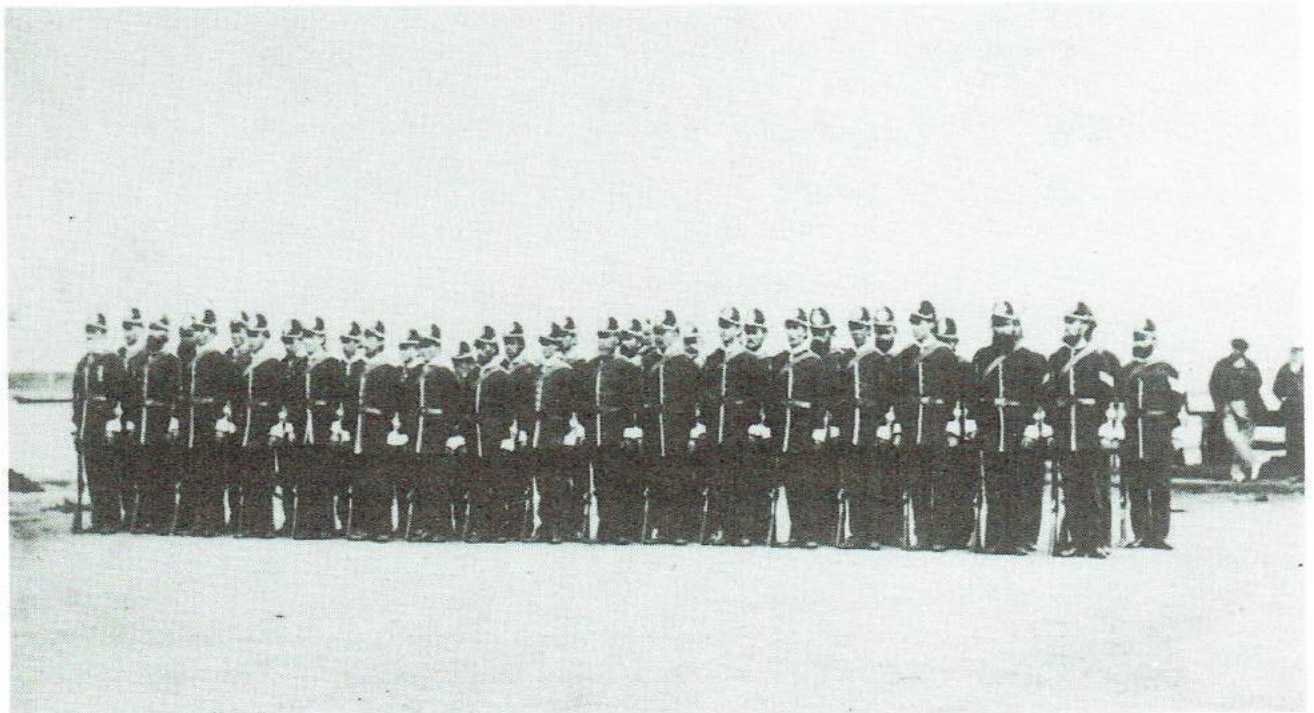
Clearly, Britain did not want to bear the cost of defence despite its responsibilities and the benefits it gained from the expanding trade with Australia. In turn all of this was bound up in increasing empire building by all nations. Whilst France and Germany were showing signs of expansion in the Pacific and even America was being watched carefully, Russia was considered to pose the greatest threat.

## AGREEMENT IS REACHED

In the mid 19th century Russia's desire to gain security and trade by acquiring all-weather seaports was already regarded by Britain as a threat to the Empire's trade routes. The British Navy did not want to use King George III Sound as a coaling base, but agreed that undefended, it was a tempting target for an enemy cruiser squadron to use as a "point d'appui" or supply base. With its location and coal supply havoc could be waged on passing trade and for this reason alone Britain would supply the armaments if the other states paid for the construction of a fortress.

Between 1887 and 1889 an agreement was reached on costs and guns. The Forts construction was to cost 15,000 pounds. Western Australia agreed to pay 5,000 pounds with the other states contributing to the balance on a population ratio basis. This also applied to operating costs. The cost of the guns provided by the Imperial Government was 13,000 pounds.

The very first concrete steps of federation had taken place and the fortress at King George III Sound (and Thursday Island) became the first federal defence of Australia. The fortification of King George III Sound was the capping of Albany's first golden era.



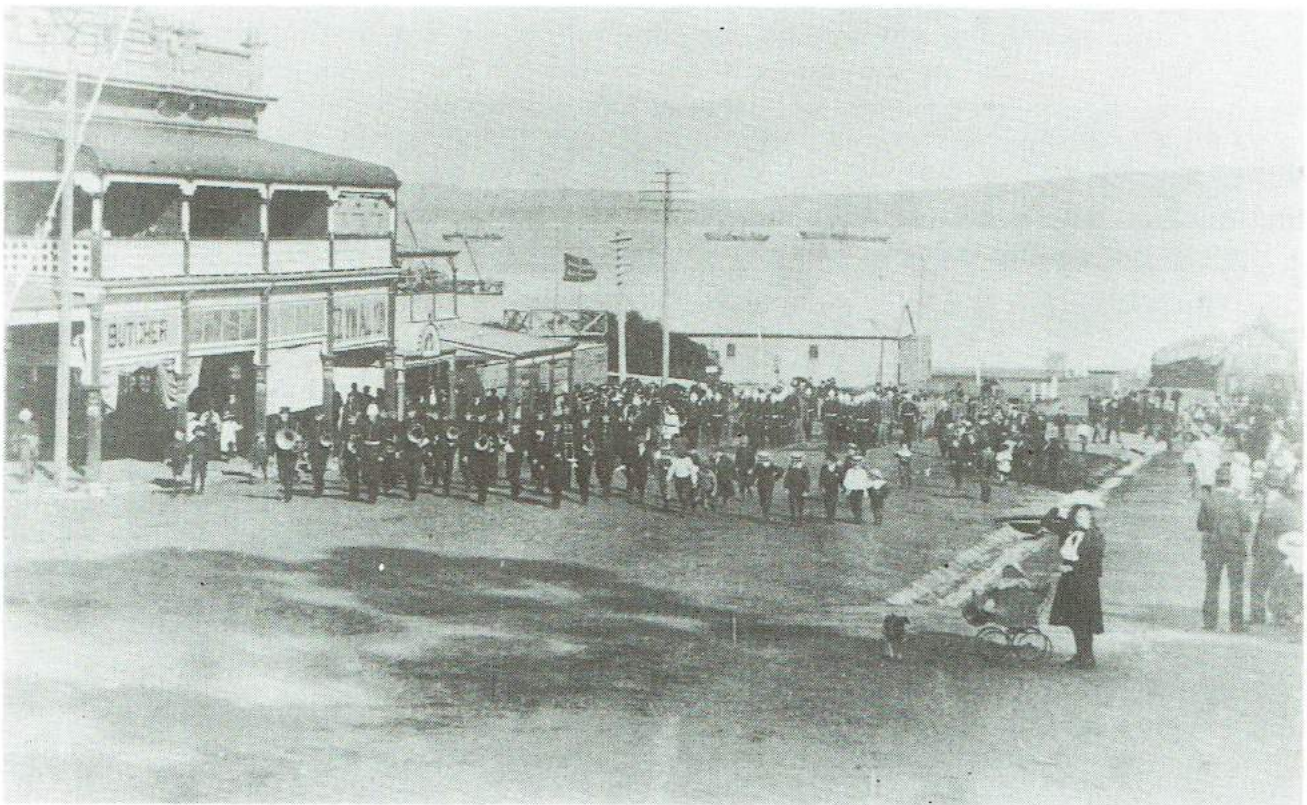
The Plantaganet Rifles 1886



## VINDICATION

Albany in the 1850's was the only West Australian port of call for the mail ships travelling between Britain and the eastern states and this continued, despite protestations from Fremantle and the State Premier, until the port of Fremantle was created at the turn of the century.

The town saw a period of considerable growth and prosperity late in the 1880's and the fortnightly P&O mail ship meant regular steamers connecting with Adelaide, Esperance and Perth-Fremantle. Then in the 1890's Albany was able to share in the Goldfields boom as passengers and goods poured through the port destined for inland Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.



York Street Parade



By the 1900's the opening of the port of Fremantle and the subsequent loss of the mail ship service diminished the role of Albany but not its strategic defence location which remains the same today as then.

Albany maintained its martial links for many years. Vessels of many navies visited the strategically important harbour which overlooked the Australian shipping routes. Prominent among the visitors were the Japanese, at that stage allies of Britain but nevertheless looked upon with some suspicion.

As if to vindicate all that Albany and King George's Sound III stood for, the arrival of the American Great White Fleet in 1908 confirmed the importance of this natural harbour.

*"The Great White Fleet arrived at dawn on 12th September. It was a cold and miserable morning, and the early arrival meant that most people were still in bed". A reporter from the 'Advertiser' was one of the fortunate few to view the arrival and he was enthralled at the sight of the 'magnificent engines of war'. "While yet the day was sufficiently young to make the light uncertain the first battleship emerged from the misty background as a black shadow. Gradually she assumed definite shape and as her lines became clearer another appeared. Yet another followed in due course and by degrees all the ships (16) came into view".*



American Great White Fleet 1908



The ships came to a position just outside of the fairway for the Harbour and about 2,000 yards from the Forts. By 7.45 am all anchors had been dropped. At 8.00 am the flagship 'Connecticut' fired a salute of 21 guns which was replied to in turn by the Forts, the HMS 'Gibraltar' and a Chilean warship which were both in the harbour.

The Western Australian Governor had come down from Perth and thousands of people crowded into Albany during the week of the visit. To entertain the men from the Fleet there were concerts, sporting events, a Mayoral Ball and numerous other functions. The town's businesses received a boon which has probably never been paralleled throughout the history of Albany. Meanwhile the vessels of the Fleet were brought in from their anchorage in the Sound to be bunkered. By 18th September 25,000 tons of coal had been loaded and on that morning the vessels built up steam, and departed as dramatically as they had arrived.

A second occasion which vindicated the decision to construct the Forts at the Sound, and of a far greater meaning to Australia, occurred in late October 1914, less than three months after the outbreak of the Great War. One of the biggest concentrations of shipping known in Pacific waters prior to the fleet movements of the Second World War appeared in King George III Sound.

The cruisers 'Minotaur', 'Philomel' and 'Psyche', and the Japanese 'Ibuki', had sailed from Wellington on October the 16th with ten transports carrying New Zealand troops. Australians sailed from Albany independently, in twenty-six ships, and all arrived by October 28, joined by the cruiser 'Sydney'.

They sailed on November 1, 'Minotaur' five miles ahead, the Australian transports behind in columns of three followed by the twin columns of the New Zealanders, flanked by 'Sydney' on the port side and 'Ibuki' to starboard, with 'Melbourne' bringing up the rear.

The event went into the history books as the first ANZAC troop convoy. It carried some 30,000 men, their horses, and "warlike stores".

*"We stared until our eyes hurt"*, wrote a gunner called Fred Harris, but the Forts saw no enemies to threaten the convoy.

The next ANZAC convoy of sixteen ships which were generally larger than those of the first, assembled at Albany on December 28, 1914. This time there were no naval escorts. None were deemed necessary. [The only German raider within likelihood of reach, the 'Emden', had been found by the 'Sydney' two hours away from the first convoy and battered into a wreck.] The convoy sailed on December 31, accompanied by an armed merchantman, the 'Berrima', which towed a submarine - the AÆ 2.

Over the next two years, the Albany Forts watched over troopships, horse transports and general cargo freighters heading to the war in the Middle East and Europe.



*"Never fired an angry shot", said Fred Harris, of the Forts. "In fact, since there was always the possibility of starting a panic or something during the war, we got in less firing practice than in peacetime."*

Now firmly on the defence maps of the world's powers, the Forts were destined never to fire in anger. Really one should not have expected anything else - they were built as a deterrent, defensive not offensive.



Troops World War I



# GUNS OF THE SOUND

## HISTORY

The main defences of the Forts were the two batteries with accompanying magazines and ancillary buildings and a submarine minefield.

The original guns were manufactured in England at Sir William Armstrong's gun factory, the Elswick Ordnance Company - EOC. The guns were 6" B.L. (bench loading), with a range of five miles (8.0km) firing a 100 lb shell with 16.5 lb cordite charge and provided with turntable slide recoil mountings with garrison carriage - to suit the en-barbette type gun pit.)

In 1904 a twin 6pdr Hotchkiss QF emplacement was constructed, west of Plantagenet Battery, to protect at close range the Harbour channel, mine fields and boom gates. The mine field was closed in 1910. Whilst the armament was never strengthened, during the 'commissioned life' of the Fortress the main armament - guns - changed twice, from the original in 1938 and again in 1945.

At the annual training shoot in 1910, A1 gun in the Princess Royal Battery developed a fault and the gun was condemned. It was removed to Fremantle in 1914, where it was installed at the Artillery Barracks, Burt Street, Fremantle for training in moving of ordnance. The gun was sold for scrap in the 1960's.

As a replacement for the A1 gun, the barrel was taken from the gun at Plantagenet Battery and from that time the Plantagenet Battery was effectively abandoned.

During the 1920s there were regular reviews, conducted by the Committee for Imperial Defence, of the coast defence requirements for Australian ports. Anti-motor torpedo boat and anti-aircraft defence of Fremantle and Albany were to receive priority as a result of their liability to a heavier scale of attack in the event of Japanese command of the sea.

In 1926 following such a review by the Committee, the Military Board recommended the following requirements for Albany: four 9.2in guns, two 6in MkVII long range guns, two 6in MkVII short range guns, six Coast Artillery searchlights, two triple 6pdr guns, four 3in anti-aircraft guns and eight anti-aircraft searchlights.

The final submission for budget funds highlighted the concern of the Australian Chief of General Staff to the threat of attack by the Japanese at some future date. Despite British claims that the Royal Navy would be able to meet such threats with the development of the naval base at Singapore, the Australian planners provided for the priority upgrading of the defences at Darwin before those at Albany.



By 1938 it was very evident that the guns needed to be replaced. It was decided to upgrade the equipment by replacing them with two QFC 6" guns, which were being withdrawn from the South Head Battery, Sydney.

### THE SOUTH HEAD GUNS

In 1939 the gun pits of the Princess Royal Battery were modified to take the central pivot mounting base of the upgraded guns which were Armstrong B.L. 6" - E.O.C. QF (c) guns. V

The history of these QF (c) guns in Australia is interesting. Originally fired with brown prismatic powder, the subsequent change to cordite charges created too high an explosive temperature and pressure for the gun construction. This resulted in the reduction of range to overcome the realised weakness.

In about 1900 the four guns of this type in Australia were returned to the Elswick works where they were strengthened and modified to the quick firing shell and cartridge combination with three also being additionally modified to suit the centre pivot mounting. Of the four guns, three were located in South Head and one at Georges Head, Sydney.

In 1939 two of the three guns were emplaced at Albany. The installation of the QF (c) guns was only a war-pending measure to overcome the age of the original guns at Albany.

### THE ARTHUR HEAD GUNS

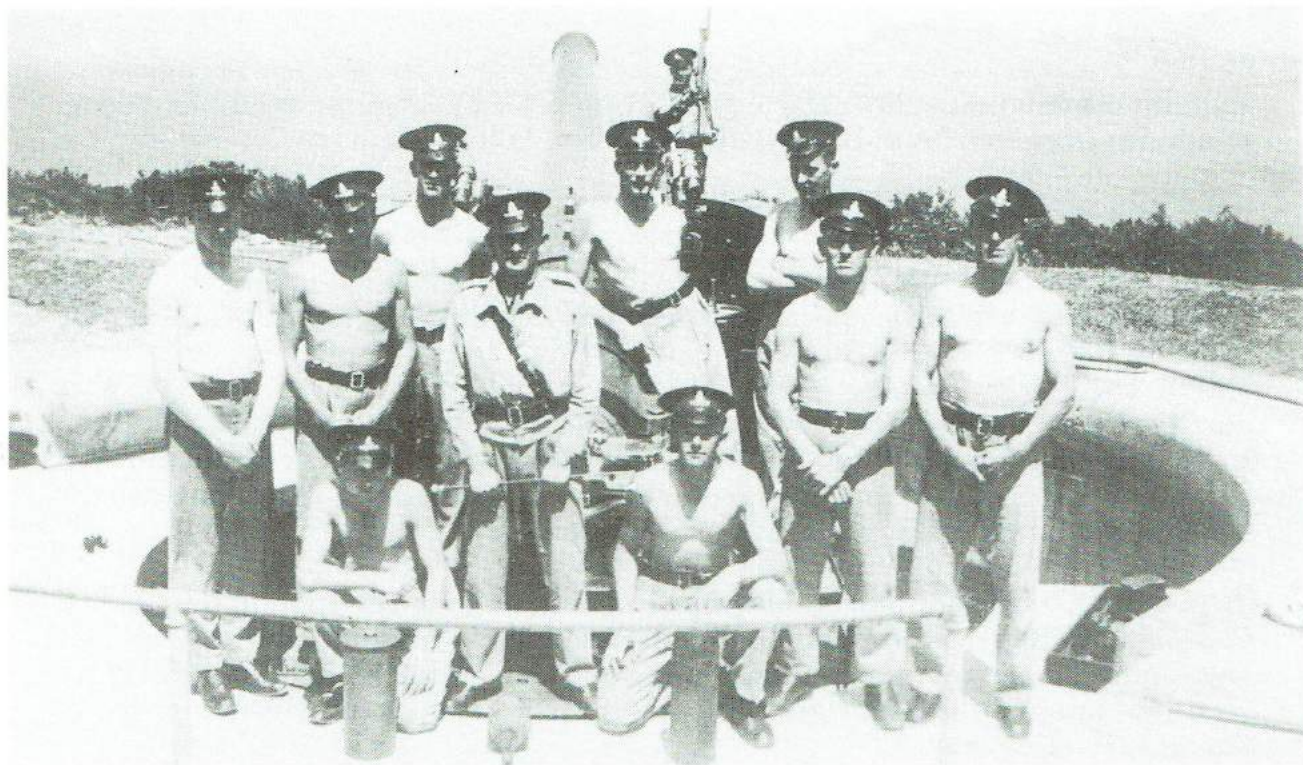
By 1945 the war in Europe was over and the Pacific war drawing to a close. Coastal defences could be rationalised and as such the QF (c) guns were replaced with the standard Vickers-Maxim BL 6" Mk VII guns. The Mk VII guns had a range of 6.8 miles (10.9 km) firing a 100 lb shell with 20 lb Cordite 20 charge.

The Mk VII guns were first installed at the Arthur Head Battery at Fremantle in 1904 and later moved to form the Leighton Beach Battery at Fremantle. They were then moved to Albany where they were operational until the early 1950s.

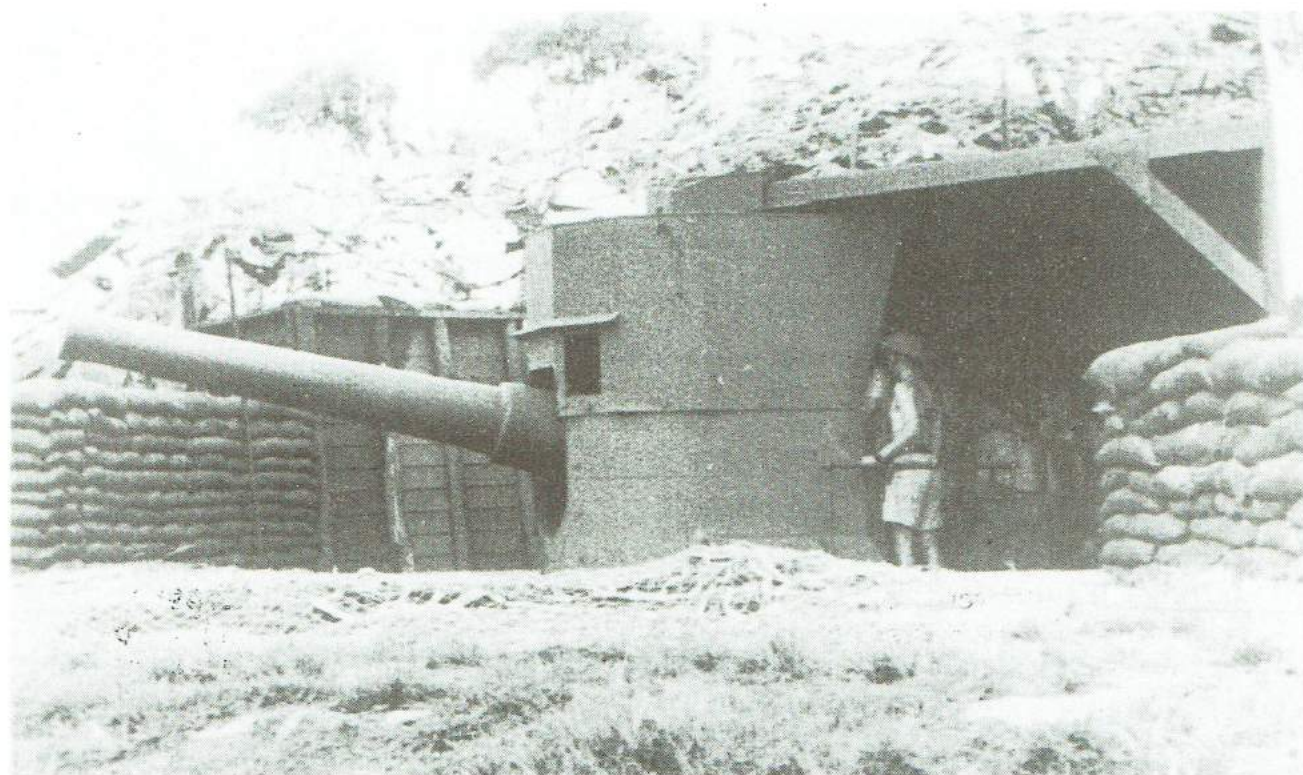
Of note is the age of all the guns. The guns, when manufactured at the turn of the century, represented the pinnacle of gun design which was to be relatively unaltered until the 1950s.

[Of the guns installed at the Forts two of the original guns and one of the last guns are being restored for re-emplacement in the gun pits of the Princess Royal Battery.]





QFC Gun



QFC Gun  
Courtesy Australian War Memorial



## **A FORTRESS IS MADE**

### **CONSTRUCTION**

In November 1890 the Military Commandants of all states and Captain Moore RN met in Albany to inspect and report on the defences proposed for King George III Sound.

John Blackburn, a defence engineer with the Victorian Department of Public Works was in attendance. On return to Victoria the designs were prepared. The plan, naturally with different guns, was an amendment to that proposed by Col Scratchley in 1881 but the submarine mining station was retained to be installed in the channel at the entrance to the Princess Royal Harbour. In May 1891 Mr Blackburn arrived at Albany to set about and supervise the construction of the fortress and barracks.

#### **THE AUSTRALIAN ADVERTISER, FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 1891**

#### **A VISIT TO THE ALBANY DEFENCE WORKS**

(BY OUR SPECIAL REPORTER)

*".... From a saddle where the slopes of Mount Adelaide run into the adjacent high ground, a mound of earth apparently surmounted by a rough flagstaff, and situated a little higher up the side of the hill, is visible, indicating where Albany's defences are in process of formation.*

*At the time of my visit - the heavy work of rock blasting and excavation was completed and the two wells - I don't know whether that is the right term or not, or receptacles for the gun platforms were nearly ready for concreting and cement. A sunken way, excavated like the aforesaid wells, out of the solid rock, was in an equally advanced state and the workmen were engaged in manufacturing concrete and filling in the material between mould planking to form, the sides of the magazine. The whole of this work is carried out with a timber skin or lining, which is removed when the cement has sufficiently set and hardened into shape. The bomb proof chambers of the magazine are sunk in the solid rock and when covered with concrete and finished off with an earthen coat will be as safe from injury as human ingenuity can possibly make anything..."*

[When the guns were replaced in 1939 the gun pits needed to be deepened and naturally had to be blasted out. The contractor in this case, unlike John Blackburn who came in on budget, nearly went bankrupt through under-estimating the strength of rock and extent of work involved.]

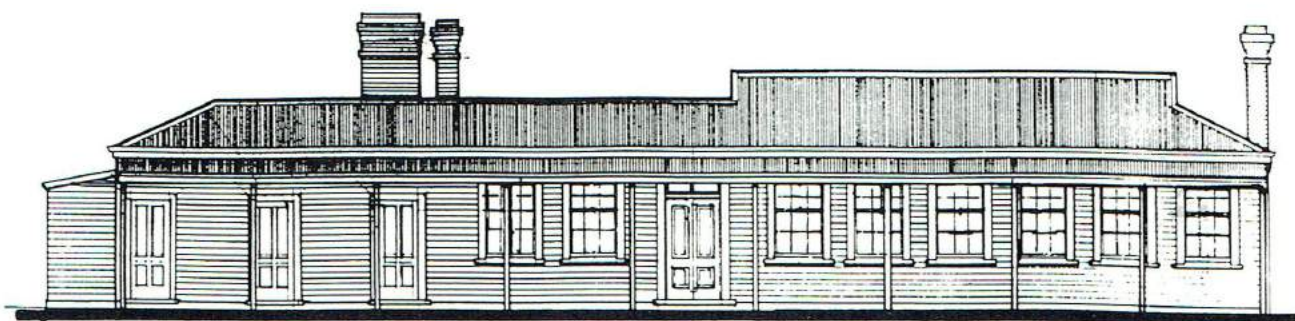


A signal mast was erected on the summit of Mount Adelaide and, adjacent to the magazine, the Warrant Officer's house and artillery store were located. Down the hill the land was cleared and the barracks and Officers' quarters were built. From here a metal road connected to the lower Plantagenet Battery where for security, a small cottage was constructed to be occupied by an NCO or caretaker.

#### THE FORTS, "AUSTRALIAN ADVERTISER", 13 JUNE 1892

*"The fortifications now being erected for the defence of this port are rapidly approaching completion, and a few weeks will see the whole of the works ready for the reception of the military force which is to be stationed here.*

*The barracks for the troops is quite close to the upper fortifications and it has been laid out in two detached portions with an eight feet wide verandah running along both the front and back portions of the structure. The barrack rooms which are to the right of the main entrance are divided from the left portions of the building by a wide passage which runs the whole width of the building. The barrack rooms which are each 36ft by 20ft, are commodious and lofty rooms, well lighted and ventilated, so that ample provision is made for thirty men. On the left of the main entrance passage there is a nice little room for the convenience of the non-commissioned officer in charge. There are also other two spare rooms on the left, and fronting the main entrance, which can be used for a military office and a doctor's room. Facing the entrance to the barrack rooms there is a compact lavatory with the water laid on. Close to the lavatory there is a storeroom for the use of the soldiers. The kitchen which is attached to the back portion of the barracks is fitted up with two coppers and a large range, sufficient to do all the necessary cooking requirements for ninety men. Attached to the kitchen there are a scullery and pantry. A few yards from the side entrance to the kitchen, there is a 9000 gallon cemented underground tank, and other sources of water supply are provided by five 400 gallon galvanised iron tanks and from these the water will be laid on for culinary and other domestic uses. These tanks can be replenished when needed, by pumping from the underground tank. A garden will be laid out in the front of the building and enclosed by a picket fence, and close to the barracks a billiard and recreation room 28ft by 20ft, for the use of the men will be erected".*



Line drawing of the barracks.  
(parade ground elevation)



## NOT MUCH CHANGED

### BUILDING

At completion in 1893 the manifest of buildings and structures numbered fourteen. The works comprised the following:-

- a) *Emplacements for three 6in B.L. guns, en barbette mountings, with cartridge recesses, fuse and shell recesses, side-arm racks, &c.*
- b) *Two magazines, each with two chambers, for 6in B.L. guns.*
- c) *One magazine chamber for 9-pr field guns.*
- d) *Laboratory. \**
- e) *Artillery store.*
- f) *Submarine mining store and office. \**
- g) *Gun-shed for 9-pr guns and for drill - located in the town.*
- h) *Married Officers' quarters.*
- i) *Married Warrant Officers' quarters.*
- j) *Married NCO or caretaker's quarters.*
- k) *Barracks for twenty-eight NCO's and men (including canteen, recreation room, horse and cart shed, 9000 gallon underground tank, offices, &c).*
- l) *Five-acre paddock, cleared, fenced, and sown.*
- m) *Roads - upwards of 1-3/4 miles cleared, formed and metalled.*
- n) *Flagstaff erected, and flag-box provided.*

*\* Located at Semaphore Point.*

The original buildings of the Forts were constructed with timber weatherboard and iron roof and called the Albany Barracks. In 1897 the stone Canteen (Military Institute) was built to replace the canteen that had been burnt down. This reconstruction allowed space for the Barracks building to be extended to accommodate the mess room.

1899 saw two stone Married Quarters built - a pair of cottages for NCOs and a single residency for the Commanding Officer. In addition the overhead water tank was erected, increasing the Forts water supply by 24,000 gallons. The tank is cast-iron, manufactured in sections and was internally bolted together after each panel had been raised to the top of the platform.

No further building took place until 1917 when the magazine for the Princess Royal Battery was extended to incorporate a shell store. The same year showers and toilets were provided for the Barracks building. The greatest development at the Forts was the construction of accommodation and facilities to cope with the influx of personnel during the 2nd World War.

Today the buildings of the Albany Barracks are essentially the pre-Federation buildings of the original Albany Barracks or replacements which were reconstructed from original drawings. The buildings constructed during the 2nd World War had



already been removed or completely destroyed before the work of restoration had commenced.

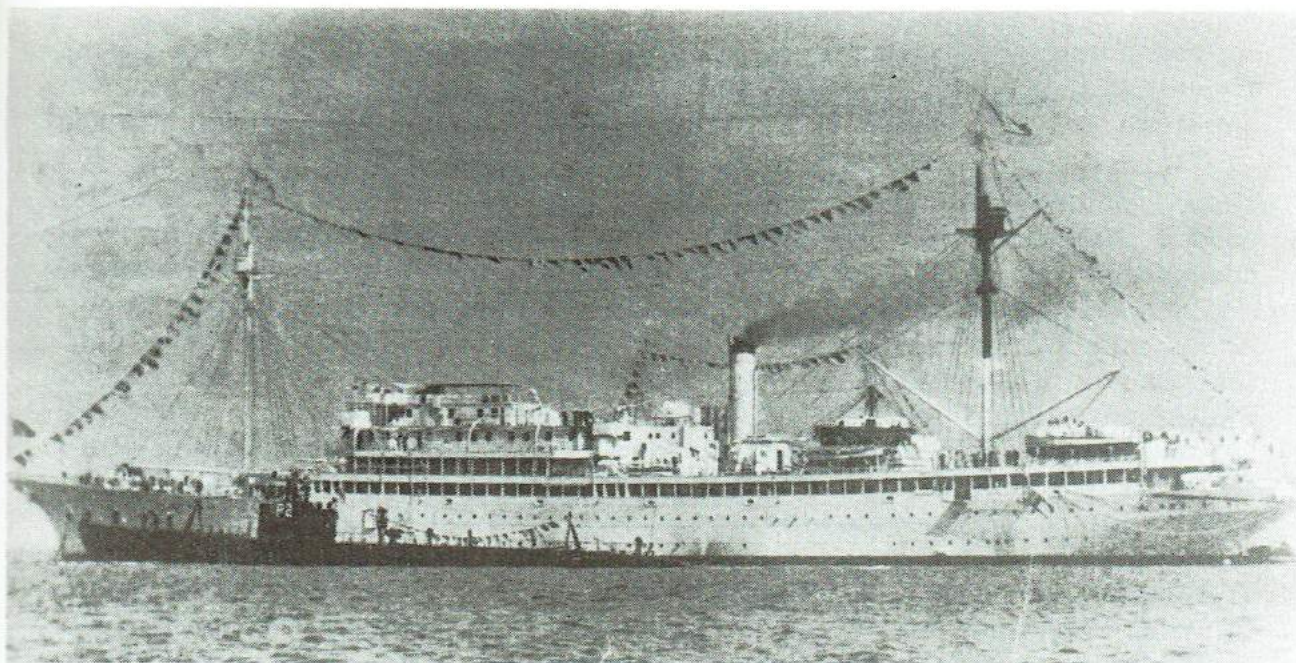
One reconstructed "building" of special note is the America's Signal Lookout Tower which is sited away from the main Barracks area overlooking the Harbour entrance channel.

#### **"ALBANY, AUSTRALIA, U.S. ADVANCE SUBMARINE BASE, 1942**

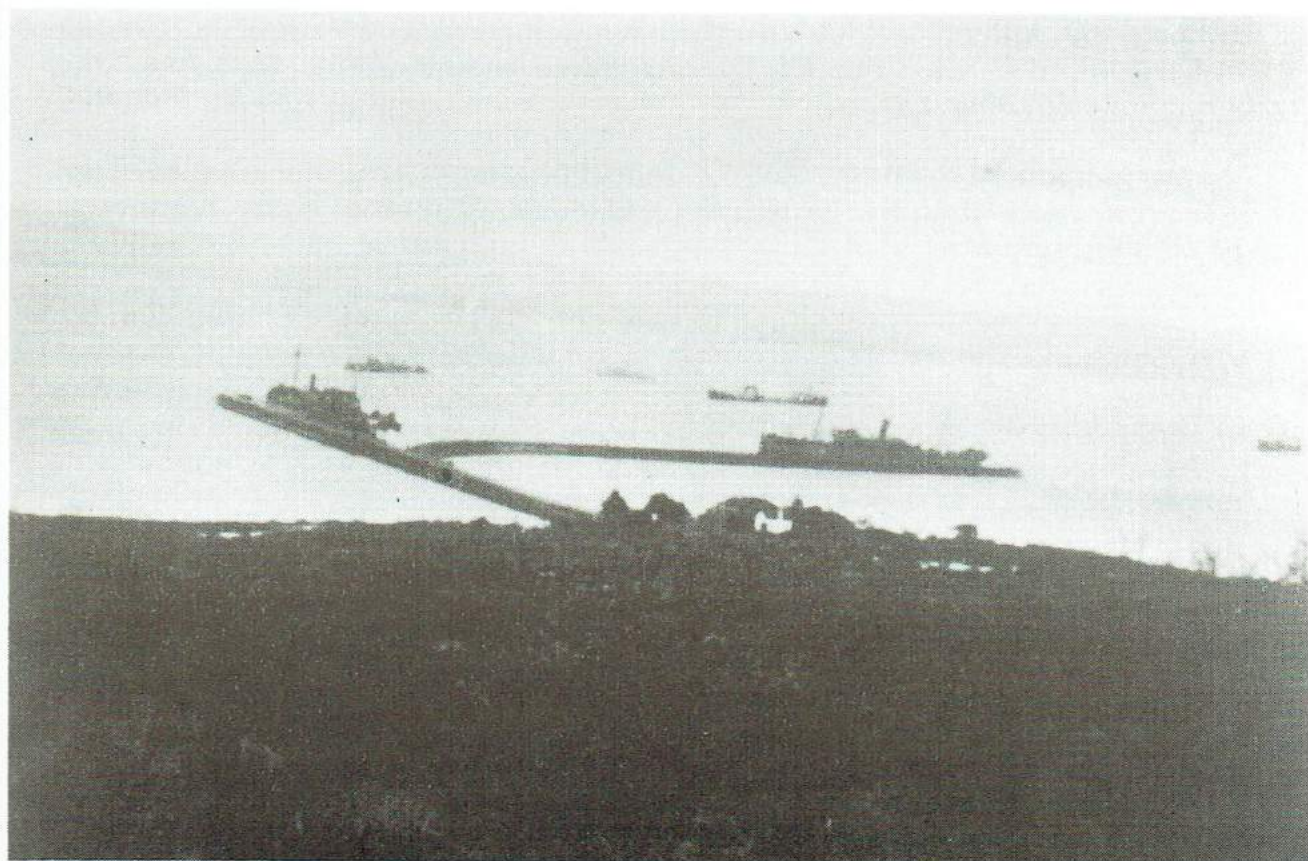
*Albany, West Australia (35 degrees S, 117 degrees E,) is a port on the south-west Australian coast about 300 miles south of Fremantle-Perth (qv). For four months (May-August 1942) it was the site of a US naval submarine base. Fearing that Fremantle might be exposed to a surprise Japanese attack, Commander, South-west Pacific Force ordered the submarine tender 'Holland' and Submarine Squadron 2 to move south to Albany, which featured a good harbour and rail communications, although it was known as "Little Siberia" to sub crews. In June 1942 Rear Adm Charles A Lockwood commanding the Fremantle based submarines (Task Force 51) conducted important torpedo tests at Albany that showed that submarine torpedos did not perform reliably. 'The Holland' was replaced by the "Pelias" but in August 1942, with the danger to Fremantle greatly lessened, Albany was abandoned as a submarine base". (From article in an American Publication.)*

To keep watch on both the Sound and the Harbour the Americans built a signal lookout. The original structure was made from the Douglas fir torpedo cases used for transporting the torpedos. Plans for a more permanent structure were in hand, when the submarine fleet transferred to Fremantle. This second structure was proceeded with and was a two-storey building with a shower and internal toilet; in 1942 - definitely American influence ! The building was used by the Australian Navy, the Public Works Department and finally honeymooners in the days of the holiday camp. Vandals eventually demolished all but the concrete base. Today a memorial structure in the form of a tower recognises the role played by the United States in the history of Albany and adjacent to the building is the Submarine's Memorial to US submarines and crew still "on patrol".





The "Holland"



Wartime in Harbour with "Holland"



## THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE FORTS

Under the initial agreement between the Australian States, South Australia was to provide the men to garrison the Forts. The type of personnel used at the Forts changed during their history, but the problems associated with a military force with no enemy remained the same for all who served there. The first unit was raised in Adelaide in 1892 by enlistment. The soldiers were trained at Fort Glanville, South Australia and arrived by ship at Albany on 28 February 1893. The ship, aptly called the 'Albany', was under the command of Captain J C Hawker and his very able assistant Sergeant-Major Hollingsworth. The 'Federal Garrison' became the No 10 Company, WA detachment and remained as such until 1911 when the detachment was abandoned and it reverted to a South Australian unit.

The local volunteer forces were used at times to man the forts. At the time of the Forts construction in 1893 the 'defence' of Albany was in the hands of the local Plantagenet Rifle Volunteers. This local unit was disbanded in 1897 but in 1899 a volunteer unit was again raised this time as the Albany Volunteer Garrison Artillery. [It was pointed out the artillery would be more useful than infantry as they could be used to man the guns in the Fort in the event of war.] This unit was destined to become the No 1 Company WA Artillery in 1900 then No 1 WA Company AGA (Australian Garrison Artillery) in 1901 when the WA Defence Force became, under federation, the Commonwealth Military Force.

The 1st Company AGA's motto was - 'Custodes Portarum' - (Guardians of the Gates), quite appropriate when recollecting the sentiments of the states that - "Albany was the key to Australia".

After Federation the Fort was garrisoned with a permanent force with a Militia unit as backup. The emphasis was to change in later years to that of the Militia manning the guns under the supervision of the Australian Instruction Corps.

In 1911, the same year the permanent force was disbanded, the No. 1 WA Company AGA was renamed 12 Battery AGA. At this point it appears that the Officer Commanding the Militia became Commanding Officer of the Forts. As this officer was a local man the relationship between town and Forts and the Forts role in Albany's social history was cemented. Up until World War I the Permanent Force was still paid for proportionately by the other Australian states but everything changed with the outbreak of hostilities.

During the Great War, coastal fortifications were manned largely by the Militia Forces. This released Permanent Force personnel for the Heavy Siege Batteries which were raised and employed on the western front. Albany and Western Australia provided quite a high percentage of these personnel.



At the end of the war, personnel reverted to their normal duties of coastal defence but casualties and loss on demobilisation meant that for Albany there would never again be a force of Permanent soldiers manning the defences.

In 1919 work was started to make Albany a naval base but, owing to the Washington Disarmament Treaty in 1921, both this idea and the Forts, were abandoned. However, in 1925 under the new designation 24th Battery AGA the Forts were re-formed but not re-armed. In 1927 the word 'Heavy' was added to the Unit's name thus the 24th Bty AGA became 24th Heavy Bty AGA.

This state of affairs, gun manning by Militia (locals) and instruction by permanent men was elevated in the eyes of the town, when in 1936, the Australian Militia Artillery was included into the Royal Australian Artillery Regiment and was entitled to add the prefix 'R' and became the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery.

Finally, (and apparently to confuse the enemy!) the Unit became the 124th Heavy Battery RAGA shortly after the outbreak of war and the Forts became "Fixed Defences - Albany".

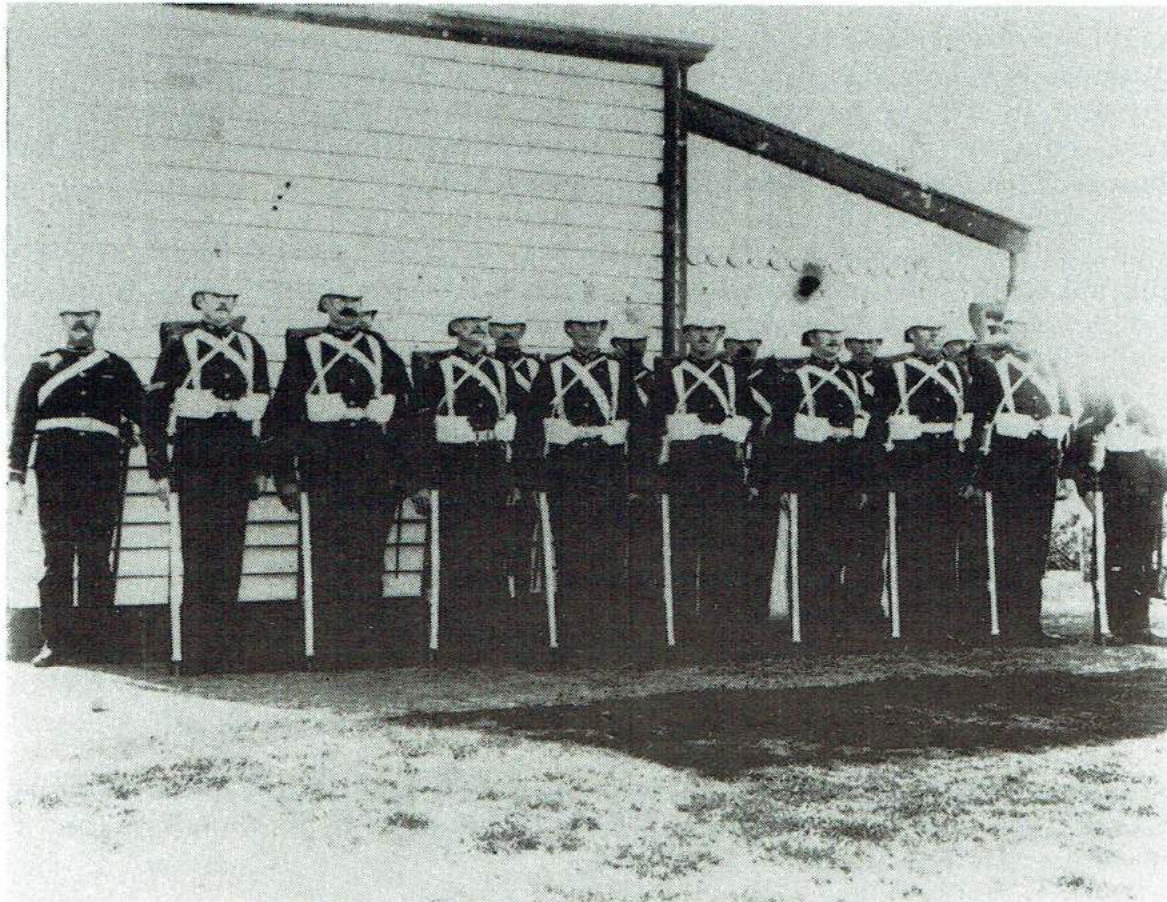
The Second World War brought the first real changes to the Forts. There was an influx of enlisted men, engineers to build and operate the searchlights, and women to operate the communications and rangefinders for the Fort and guns. These women were members of AWAS (Australian Womens Army Service ) and it was the first time women were allowed into 'fire' situations in the Australian Forces.

Hundreds of personnel were stationed at the Forts before the tide of war turned and everything moved north or overseas and left the Forts in the hands of the VDC (Volunteer Defence Corps).



The AWAS Arrive





The Garrison 1896

On 17 March 1893, the Advertiser reported: *"The permanent artillery have settled down at the Forts — (waiting for guns to arrive) — the men have been clearing up, making a parade ground 60 feet by 120 feet in front of the barracks"*.

Captain Hawker didn't keep the men idle. Sporting fixtures between men of the Forts and others were soon established, in cricket, rifle shooting, and eventually, Australian Rules football. "They seem to have settled down alright." Captain Hawker told the "Adelaide Observer" in July 1893.

"I think they are pleased. They have been treated very well by the West Australian government, and their quarters are very good. Things are rather expensive over there and the Government at my insistence agreed to give the men a ration of a quarter-of-a-pint of milk and a pound of green vegetables per man per day." The men would have paid for these extras in South Australia.





Captain Hawker



A scale of rations for military forces in Victoria was offered as a guide for the Albany garrison. Military HQ in Melbourne, noted that South Australian rations were "not equal" to the Victorian.

<i>Beef or mutton</i>	...	<i>1 pound 8 ounces a day</i>
<i>Fresh bread</i>	...	<i>1 pound 4 ounces</i>
<i>Potatoes</i>	...	<i>1 pound 4 ounces</i>

This gave a soldier 680 grams of meat each day, with 567g of bread and a similar amount of potatoes. He also received daily allowances of "best counter" sugar, "best Congon" tea, coffee, salt, mustard and pepper, and monthly allowances of raisins or sultanas and flour.

To begin with there was plenty to occupy the new garrison for it was the lot of Captain Hawker and his men to face the daunting task of mounting the big guns. 'Repository'; the art of moving ordnance (guns) was part and parcel of training for all artillery officers and men.

Today the telephone can be used to order a crane to load, unload, shift, reposition and place. A truck can be ordered to transport the guns and generally the roads are good, but in 1893 it was mainly manual labour, blocks and tackle, tripods or gyny, rollers, levers and roadways (timber platforms for equipment shifting) that were used. Roads were at best gravel but more often sand tracks. To make life complete, the guns were positioned on top of a hill with the Albany gunbarrels alone weighing 51/2 tons each.

After successfully mounting the guns, Captain Hawker handed over command to Captain Harvest RE. With an autocratic manner, Captain Harvest was fresh out of England, an officer and ideas of discipline which upset the South Australians of the Albany garrison. The men were accustomed to Officers who knew how and when to be easygoing. By 1896, none of the original force recruited in South Australia remained, having over a period, been replaced with WA enlisted men.

The enemy for these men was boredom. There was training and more training, books and billiards for relaxation, dumb-bells, horse vaults, parallel bars and rings for exercise. Life was brightened momentarily in 1897 when the canteen and recreation room burnt down and again in 1907 when the barracks offices were burnt out. In general however, day to day life was one of training and waiting, waiting for an enemy who, because you were there, should never come.

To their counterparts, the glamorous Field Artillery, the Garrison Artillery were known as 'concrete soldiers' all dressed up in the skills of war and nowhere to go.





No. 10 Coy. RAGA c1904



## REMINISCENCES OF THE MILITIA

An Albany identity Len Hill (deceased) recounted his experience as Militia at the Forts to the 'Albany Advertiser'.

*"About 1900 the Albany Volunteer Artillery was formed to help garrison the Forts. The name of this unit was altered several times but up until the time it was disbanded after the war (1945) it had a reputation of being one of the most efficient units in the Commonwealth....."*

*"I sneaked from the Band of the Albany Volunteer Artillery into the ranks just as I was sixteen years old, in 1902, and served for twelve years ....."*

*"Most of our drill and shooting was done with A1 and B1 (A2) - Princess Royal Battery - although occasionally we used F1 - Plantagenet Battery. I was Gun Captain of F1 on an occasion I will not forget. I had a very painful five minutes as shot after shot literally hit me in the ears. The detachment scored the possible hits in good time - I scored a pair of cracked ear drums but fortunately my hearing was not affected...."*

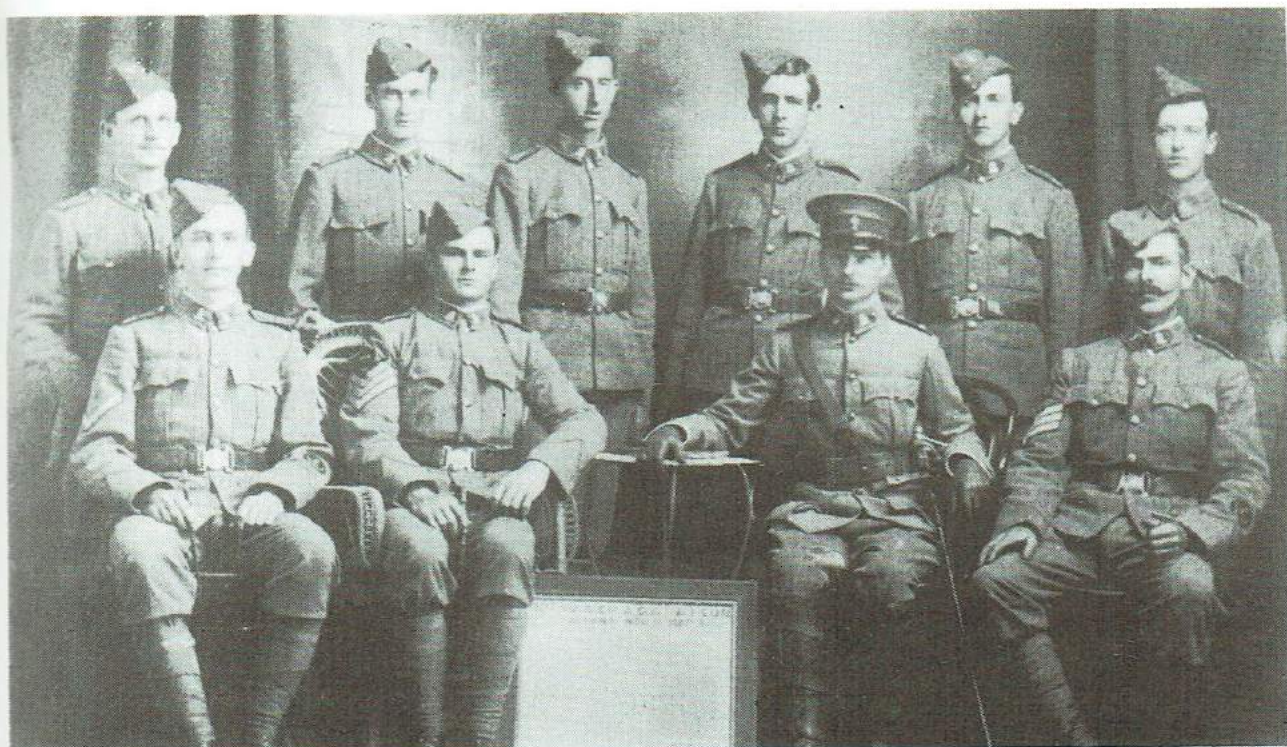
*"There was a lot of shooting with the Fortsmen. We used to spend the long weekend in camp at the June holiday. On the Monday the programme was for each gun to do its service shoot as a competitive shoot under as near action conditions as possible. The first shoot was at 4000 yards then at 8000 yards. While waiting for the launch to tow the target out to 8000 yards, I examined the crack on A1 which had grown about an inch. There was also a crack on the other side of the muzzle which was 2ft 8in long. There were four shots to fire, needless to say they were never fired from that gun!!! (A1 was condemned. It was removed and replaced by F1 at a week camp in January 1910 immediately prior to a visit by Lord Kitchener - Commander in Chief, British Army)".*

Weekday evening training at the Drill Hall, weekend training and annual-week training shoots at the Forts, was the pattern of the volunteer's life.

An average of seven or eight shots per gun per year was fired in full practice. At an expected 'life' per gun of 300 shots this gave a real life of forty years. Right up until 1939 all men at Albany trained on these guns which were by then obsolete, but still very effective.

(The accuracy of the guns could not be doubted and this was proved in 1928 when combined with great 'esprit de corp' the 24th Battery AGA took off the annual Commonwealth shoot with a score of 100% for accuracy, 97% for drill and 90% for time).





Militia 1907  
No. 1 W.A. Coy. AGA, A1 Gun



24th Heavy Battery  
RAGA (M) c1939





After Shoot Mess Dinner

The depression of the '30s saw some unlikely people joining the Militia. Many fisherman, who should have joined the Navy, and others instead chose the Militia, pocket money and a greatcoat which could be taken home.

All too soon, war was declared again and once more the Militia were garrisoned at the Forts, billeted in tents, and waited for the enemy. Once more activities had to be conjured up to keep that enemy - boredom - at bay. Tennis courts, slit trenches, dummy guns, camouflage and Lewis gun positions were created; fishing for relaxation and change of diet; cricket and basketball on the parade ground for exercise and in the evening ....?

On 25 March 1892, the Advertiser reported that *"Early this year an energetic local businessman, to wit, one Jean Marie Pierre de Guille, built the Esplanade Hotel at Middleton Beach, despite violent local opposition and the military authorities who considered that the hotel would encourage the garrison to sneak down through the bush for a 'quickie' for too often and too long."*

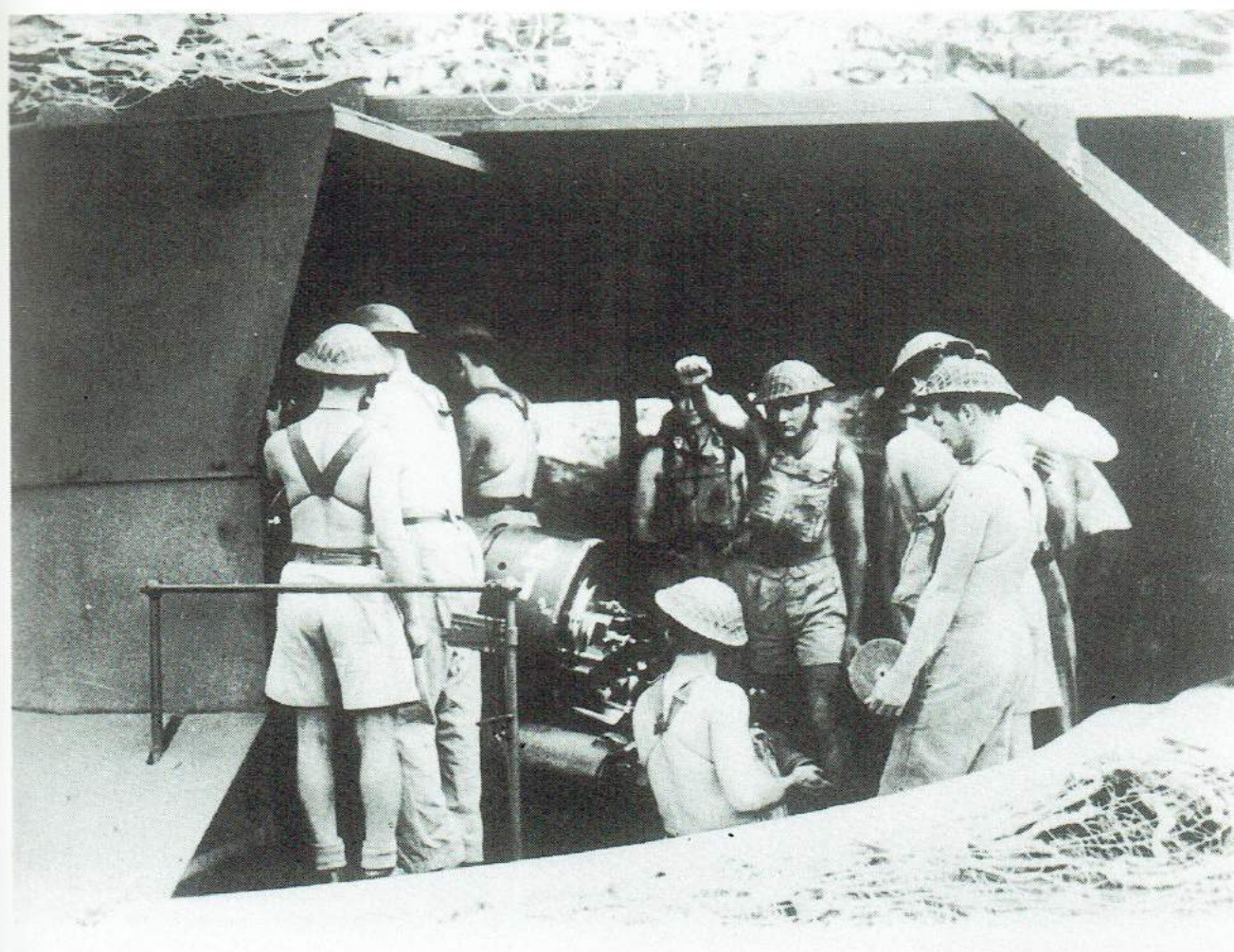
The short cut to the Esplanade Hotel is still evident today to those who know what to look for. It was used by the wartime garrison, just as the military authorities had feared. During the Second World War it was also the path of chickens taken from the runs at the Hotel. These were fated to become supper so long as they were not missed, the feathers not seen and the Police talked away from the kitchen and the tantalising smell of roast chicken!



Dummy attacks were rehearsed and the men had to adjust to the advent of working with women soldiers for the first time in an "action" situation and living at the Forts. The launches pulled the targets and the training continued, not just in the day, but also at night now searchlights had been installed.

It is said that it takes seven years to make a gunner. To shorten this many hours were spent on the 'dummy loader' - shell in - ram home then cartridge and breech closed, breech open 'spent' cartridge out - swab and sponge. When the shell went in it fell out on ramming so back it went in again and the sequence was repeated again and again and again ...

*"...Young fellows, weekend soldiers, with guns older than they were, waited to stop a full-scale invasion. It sounds amusing now, not then though. The Poms were up against it, the Yanks were retreating and it looked like our turn. Too bloody true it wasn't funny!",* recollected Frank Gomm, an Albany identity and tireless worker for the R.S.L.



Gun Crew In Action  
Courtesy Australian War Memorial

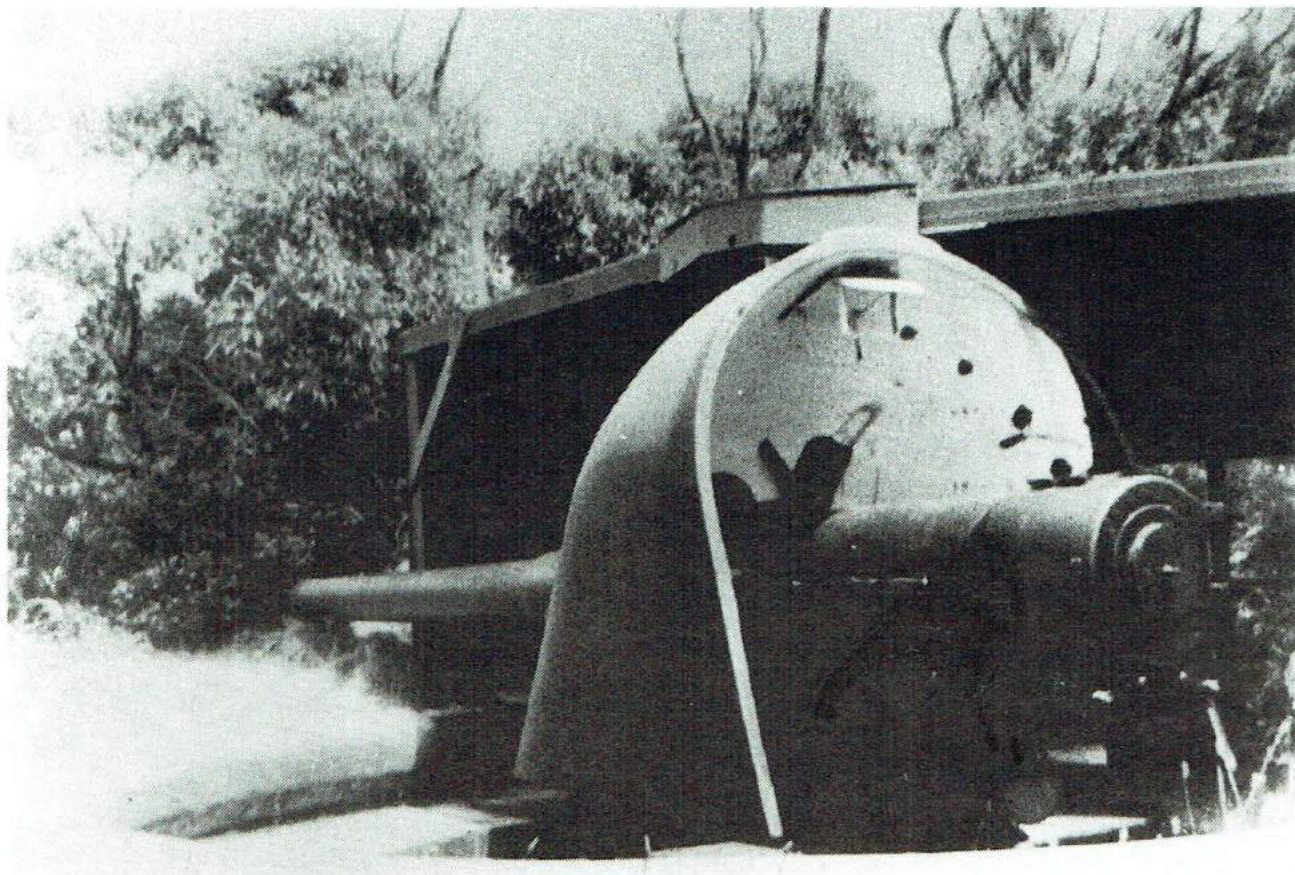


Action in a gun pit was far from romantic - asphyxiated from cordite, blinded by the flash of explosive, deafened by the crack and concussion of firing and sweating from the heat and loading of 100 lb shells and 20 lb cartridges - it was a difficult job.

Once more the Forts saw troops with all the skills of war so valuable where they were, they could not be posted away. Every man, Jack and boy watched his friend sign up in the AIF, Navy and RAAF and posted away to where the action was. All they could do was stand guard duty and combat boredom and frustration.

It was no wonder they called themselves the 'chocolate soldiers'. In the end when the tide of war had turned many left but few got further than being posted to another heavy battery in the North, at Darwin, or to New Guinea and the islands.

The end of the war saw none of these men return to the Forts for the Forts had been put on 'care and maintenance'. The Forts were manned by a District Staff of four or five, with one Officer. Practice shoots were carried out under the supervision of Safety Officers and a contingent of regular soldiers from Fremantle.



Sealed Off and Near the End

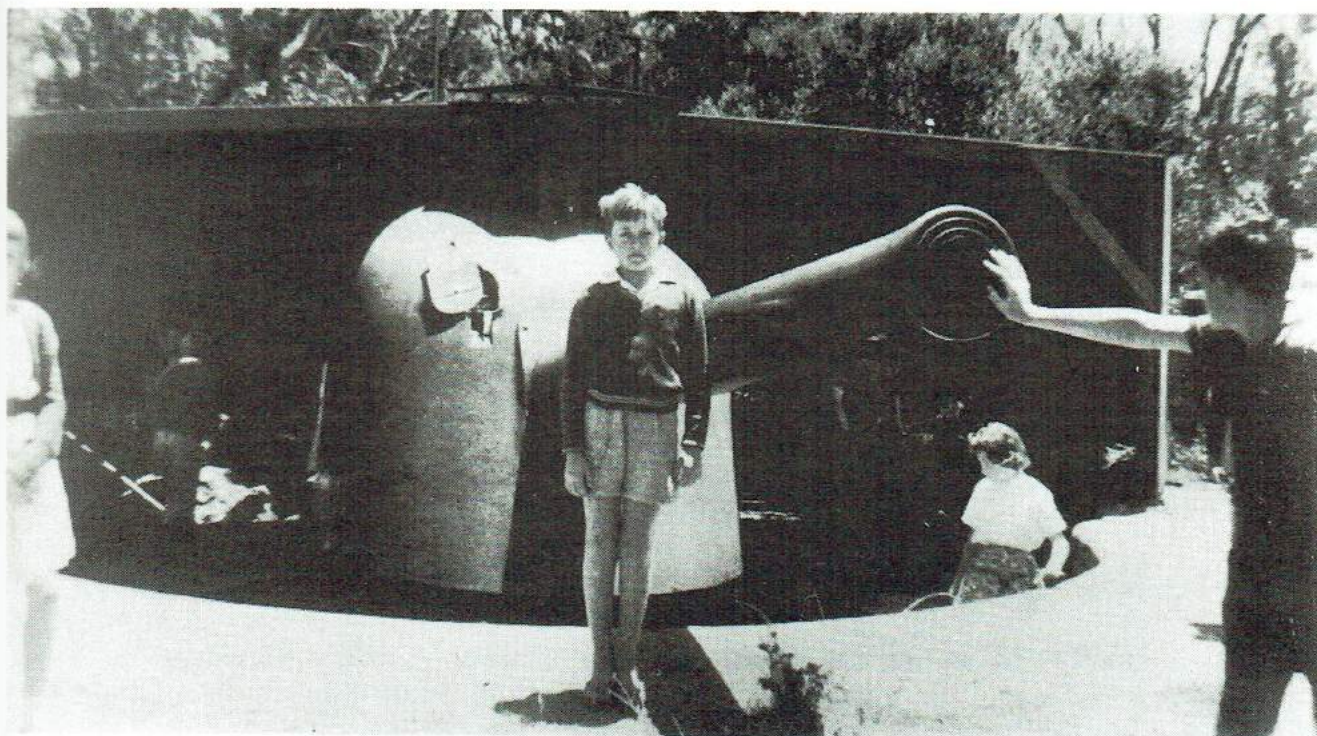


## THE START OF A NEW ERA

In the early 1950s, the magazines were emptied, the cordites were burnt and other items sold, relocated or dumped at sea with most of the shells.

Only two regular Army soldiers remained, but the Forts were not vacated. At the time there was an extreme shortage of accommodation and the Barracks were used to house Public Works Department construction workers. . Many of the buildings were used for civilian accommodation at one time or another. In 1956 throughout the Commonwealth, the coastal defence system was abandoned. The Forts area became surplus to Defence requirements and was referred to the Chief Property Officer, Department of Services and Property, Perth, on 30 November, 1959, for disposal.

In the early 1950s, buildings at the Forts were used as a temporary school because Lockyer Primary School and the Albany High School were filled to capacity.



School at the Forts

The Department of the Interior eventually sold the Forts to a private businessman, Mr George Mauger. He secured freehold and leasehold on the land and intended establishing holiday accommodation units and a recreation complex. Unfortunately, Mr Mauger was killed as he was returning from Perth with the signed development papers.



Mr S Caratti took control of the land. An organisation of businessmen formed the company Forts Freehold Pty Ltd and in 1965, plans were announced to build one hundred homes, a luxury motel unit, caravan park and service station. There were some problems raising finance and meeting planning and health standards and interest in the project started to wane.

Many of the buildings were used for holiday accommodation until the early 1970's. Since then the Forts were badly vandalised and fell into such poor condition that the area posed a safety hazard.

Numerous ideas were put forward to restore and renovate the Forts but it was not certain who had ownership and control of the land. It was felt that the Forts area should be made an 'A' Class Reserve to enable complete restoration and preservation of its historic value.

In April 1975, the Premier, Sir Charles Court, advised the Albany Town Council that a grant of \$50,000 had been approved for the purchase of the Forts. After some years of negotiations the Forts were resumed by the Public Works Department. The resumption notice appeared in the Government Gazette on 21 October 1977.

Council applied to have the land vested in the Town of Albany., With the assistance and support of the Western Australian Heritage Committee, this was approved and Reserve 38226 was vested in the Town of Albany for the purpose of 'Parklands and Recreation'. Notices to this effect were published in the Government Gazette on 31 March, 1983.



## **HERITAGE RESTORED**

By 1983, the site was in a state of vandalised neglect and in many people's estimation, ready for 'landscaping with a bulldozer'. The Albany Town Council did not share this view and instead, with assistance from the Commonwealth and West Australian Governments, embarked on the ambitious concept which it is still developing.

On gaining authority over the Forts site, Council instigated a management report to identify site potential and possibilities for development. The concept behind today's Forts restoration programme originated when one of the areas identified in the report caused Council to face the dilemma of commercial exploitation of the site.

The site with its superb location naturally attracted great interest for commercial use. This idea was attractive to Council in that it provided a source of funding to restore some of the fortress. However, rather than introduce a 'foreign' attraction it was decided to develop the Forts as its own attraction and:-

*"Conserve, restore and develop the Forts-site' to illustrate the life, history and heritage of the first federal fortress as a self-contained, living and self-supporting world-class attraction".*

Within the boundaries of the main fortress site, this concept has resulted in the desire to create an historic artillery military park where the buildings, structures, guns and grounds would be restored and featured to compliment their original function, and developed to provide areas for exhibitions, displays, amenities, facilities and accommodation:

- \* The restored buildings will illustrate the social, cultural and heritage aspects.
- \* Developing amenities and facilities compatible to the dignity of the site to provide economic viability and assurance for the future.
- \* Accommodation to provide on-site security and low-level maintenance.
- \* Restoration of the guns to return the Forts to its point of cultural significance in Australian history.

The finished historic military park will see the Forts once more as an active area; restored as part of our past and a living heritage.



In getting to the stage that you see today the Town of Albany would like to acknowledge the assistance of:-

The ex-servicemen and women of the Forts;

The Council staff, businesses and people of the Town of Albany;

especially the men and women of The Forts Team who crafted and worked so hard to rebuild the dignity of the buildings, grounds and guns;

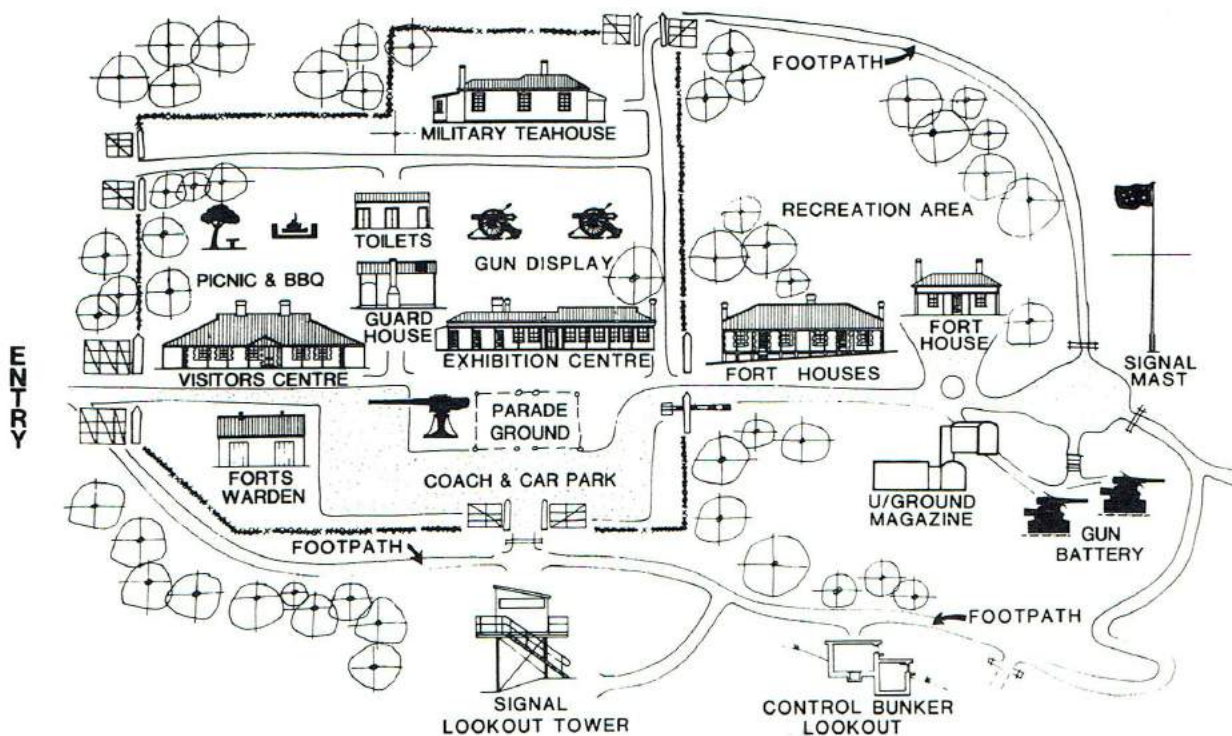
Western Australian Tourism Commission;

WA Heritage Trails Network;

WA State Government;

The Australian Bicentennial Authority;

The Commonwealth of Australia.



The Forts Today.



